

PRESENTED TO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Portrait of David A. Wells Given by His Daughter-in-Law,
Mrs. Marietta Allcroft of England—Ozias Dodge Spoke
Upon the Graphic Arts—Valuable Loan Collection From
New York on Exhibition.

A programme of exceptional interest which occupied the winter of 1912-13, the annual meeting of the historical society held Wednesday afternoon in the Converse Art gallery, was the presentation of a handsome portrait of the late Hon. David A. Wells, the gift of his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Marietta Allcroft of England, and an exceptionally interesting address on the graphic arts by Ozias Dodge. Mr. Dodge had an unusual display of engravings to illustrate his talk, many of them by the best known masters. The whole collection, valued at about \$4,000, was loaned Mr. Dodge for the occasion by the Frederick Keppel & Co. of New York city. Both before and after the meeting Mr. Dodge accompanied those present about the room, pointing out the differences and notable points of the various engravings. The most valuable piece of the whole collection was a small fine engraving valued at \$850. There was also an interesting display of Mr. Dodge's own work.

President Ernest F. Rogers presided at the meeting and spoke briefly. He called upon Leonard O. Smith for a report on securing the picture of the late David A. Wells, a portrait of which was the subject of the address. Mr. Smith spoke as follows, the picture being unveiled during his address:

Mr. President, Members of the New London County Historical Society, Ladies and Gentlemen: You will remember that on our last meeting in October last year our honored president, Ernest F. Rogers, expressed a wish that the society might have a portrait of the late David A. Wells to hang among others of those who were once presidents of this society. Jonathan Trumbull and I were appointed a committee to see if such a one could be obtained.

Letters were written by Mr. Trumbull to two of our three oldest states where he had hoped to secure one, but none could be found.

Finally it occurred to me to write to my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Marietta Allcroft, in England. She replied: "I much regret that no portrait exists. But she expressed much interest in the plan, stating further that his memory was very dear to her, and added that if we would have an enlarged engraving of a small picture which she enclosed she would pay all charges and take pleasure in presenting it to the society."

In the name of Mrs. Marietta Allcroft, your committee presents this portrait to the New London Historical Society.

Two Distinguished Names.

It is perhaps fitting that I should add a few words more concerning him whose name we thus honor by placing this portrait upon the walls of our historical society. The records show that the first president of the society was our distinguished citizen, Hon. Lafayette S. Foster. It gives me all the more pleasure to mention that name because Mr. Foster was a Franklin boy—born in my own native town. The people in the town still take great pride in counting him an honored son.

A worthy successor of Mr. Foster was Hon. David Wells, of Massachusetts, born in Springfield in the year 1828, a graduate of Williams college, then of Harvard. He was a collector, then of Harvard. He was the author of several text books on chemistry, geology and physics.

After the close of the Civil war he was made chairman of a committee to inquire into methods of raising the revenue of the country and was finally appointed commissioner of internal revenue of the United States.

He rendered other distinguished services both to the state and nation. Later in life he became a strong advocate of free trade, but in this he did not have the support of the dominant party nor of a majority of the people of the country.

Accepted by A. H. Brewer.

President Rogers thanked Mr. Smith for his efforts in securing the portrait and called upon Arthur H. Brewer for a speech of Mr. Wells. Mr. Brewer, who was an intimate personal friend of the late Mr. Wells, gave many reminiscences and told of his character. It was Mr. Wells, said Mr. Brewer, who was really instrumental in saving the union back in 1864, when the United States bonds were in a perilous state of depression. He was then a teacher in Troy, N. Y., and he sprang prominently into public life through the publication in that year of an essay on the resources and debt-paying ability of the United States, bearing the title of "Our Budget and Our Strength." Originally prepared as an essay for a local club, it was almost immediately reprinted by the National Publication society of New York and also by the United States government, and became the great pamphlet of the war period, circulating in this country and in Europe, where it was translated into French and German, to the extent of many thousand copies, and strengthening the credit of the government—as was expressed at the time—as much as would have been accomplished by a great and successful battle. One result of this publication was a conference between President Lincoln and Mr. Wells, at the request of the former, in October, 1868, the best means of dealing with the great national debt which the war had entailed and the best method of raising the revenue. Mr. Wells was appointed its chairman. The report of the conference, mainly the result of Mr. Wells' investigations, was of such a masterly character that the commission was dissolved and speedily office, running for four years, never before or since.

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known in the history of the government, named, that of the commissioner of revenue of the United States, was created in which Mr. Wells served with distinction. All agree, however, in according to him a high rank as an author and a deep thinker and his fame as such extends beyond the boundaries of our own country. The New London Historical society may well be proud of all four of her present members.

C. A. Williams of New London was the third, and the fourth is our present honored Ernest F. Rogers. I will add in closing that the society was never in better condition, never so ably managed as at the present time. And very much of encouragement and support have come from the women of this country. I express not only the sentiment of members of this society, but also those of every person present, in sending to Mrs. Allcroft our united thanks for her gift—the portrait of our honored citizen—the late David A. Wells.

The Graphic Arts. President Rogers then called upon Mr. Dodge for a talk on The Graphic Arts.

Mr. Dodge said that he had decided to speak upon the side of the graphic arts, which was the most interesting to him, on which he was best informed—the processes and methods of making the engravings.

It would be well at the start, he said, to divide all printing into three classes—intaglio surfaces, or those in which all the linked portions to be printed are held in lines or dots below the main surface, such as line engravings, etchings, mezzotints, aquatints, etc. Second, relief surfaces, where all portions printed are above the main surface, as ordinary type on the printed page, wood engravings, and the majority of all modern printed pictures, like half-tones and line-blocks. Third, one surface only, the ink to be printed resting on the surface that also supports the paper printed, as all lithographic work.

Explained by Charts. Mr. Dodge showed a chart on which the various processes were classified, and then proceeded to explain the methods and characteristics of each. A part of Mr. Dodge's talk which aroused most interest was that of the lithographic process, which he explained by his own experience in engraving. He said, in part:

About 15 years ago I was greatly interested in making drawings in stone, and printing them on a little hand press myself. I learned the art abroad and from a poor Frenchman, and when I returned to the great city because I suppose he really knew too much to be of use to the great American Lithographic Trust company.

The ease with which the drawing is made, the look of the original pencil strokes that are preserved in the lithographic print, and the range from the softest and most delicate shade to the deepest black, was what fascinated me, and so, when I took to inventing, my first attempt was to do the same thing on copper, for copper is better than stone to print from, and the reasons I have already pointed out.

Etchings Like Original Pencil Drawings. There are some of my etchings made by this process on the walls, and you will notice that while they are prints from intaglio plates, they look like original pencil drawings. They are made with a pencil on a special transparent paper, which is essential to the carrying out of the process, so I invented that also.

I had a definite ideal when I was working this method out, and that was to preserve as far as possible the first strokes, the real intention of the artist. After five years' hard work, I should say, looking back on it now, I had an idea also that it might revive intaglio printing, which is after all the most beautiful way of printing, for it is very much quicker than the old way of making an intaglio plate.

Instead, it has become commercial and is used for relief cut making extensively. The main original thought in this invention was that I reversed the old intaglio method of getting incised or intaglio lines in a plate by acid and with a tool.

This I did by building up new copper electrologically deposited all around the lines. It is curious that it had not been thought of, considering the fact that the plates have been made in the last four hundred years to get lines down into copper.

The method is really very simple. The lines of the drawing are transferred to a perfectly clean copper plate, and these lines refuse the copper that rapidly carries on the plate in the electrolytic bath. The result is, as in all engraved plates, a groove representing the line to hold the ink in place, with this difference—the old face of the copper is at the bottom of the groove.

Mr. Dodge was complimented on his excellent address and all took much interest in the exhibit.

About a dozen New London members of the society were included in the attendance. Contributions for Maintenance Fund. In connection with the raising of an endowment fund to defray the expenses of maintaining the society's home in New London, the Shaw market, a contribution of \$25 was reported from W. A. Chester of Boston, and an interesting letter from him was read.

The committee arranging for the meeting consisted of H. A. Tirrell, Jonathan Trumbull and L. O. Smith.

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